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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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MAY 12 1975



The Honorable Ray J. Madden
Chairman, Committee on Rules
House of Representatives

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Dear Mr. Chairman:

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We noticed, during our continuing reviews of the Environmental Protection Agency's programs, a practice being used in the legislative branch which, ~~if changed~~, could save Government operating costs. This report discusses our suggestion for improvement and is being provided at the request of your staff. 2.4

An official of the House of Representatives new bill information office has told us that the practice of introducing identical bills (a bill which word for word is the same as a previously introduced bill, with the exception of the House number and list of joint sponsors) in the House of Representatives is not uncommon. According to an official at the Government Printing Office, about 400 identical bills are introduced during each session of the Congress. The purpose of introducing identical bills seems to be to add names to a list of joint sponsors. For example, House bill 2175 was introduced once on January 28, 1975. Identical bills were introduced twice on February 26, 1975, once in March, and twice in May.

House Resolution 42, which was passed on April 25, 1967, limits to 25 the number of members who may jointly sponsor a House bill. When the number of members desiring to jointly sponsor a bill exceeds this limit, an identical bill or bills are introduced. For example, if 90 members desire to jointly sponsor a bill, four identical bills would have to be introduced. The name of the original bill's sponsor would appear on each of the bills introduced, thereby limiting to 24 joint sponsors added on each identical bill. In contrast, the Senate allows the full membership to jointly sponsor a bill.

Before House Resolution 42, joint sponsorship of House bills did not exist. During the House discussion on House Resolution 42, it was noted that a congressman had introduced a housing bill a few days before the discussion and that more than 90 members later introduced separate, identical bills. The cost of printing this 36-page bill for 90 separate sponsors was \$8,292. Had the one bill been sponsored by 90 members, the one printing would have cost \$607, or a saving of \$7,685. With this type of saving in mind, House Resolution 42 was introduced as a means of reducing legislative costs.

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The practice of introducing identical bills is expensive, since each identical bill introduced in the House is processed by an average of 14 persons. Each identical bill is printed by the Government Printing Office. A minimum of 250 copies are printed of all identical bills, plus 50 additional copies for each joint sponsor. According to a Government Printing Office official, the cost of printing an identical bill of moderate length (about 20 pages) introduced on the same day as the original bill would be about \$52. If the identical bill is introduced at a later date (which is usually more common), the cost is \$209. Each copy printed in addition to the minimum 250 copies costs about 19 cents.

The projected cost of printing an identical 20-page bill having 25 joint sponsors and introduced at a later date than the original bill is about \$446, according to the Government Printing Office. Assuming that all the 400 identical bills introduced during each session of the Congress are of moderate length, jointly sponsored by 25 members, and introduced at a later date than the original bill, the cost of printing the copies would be about \$178,000.

Other costs are also associated with introducing an identical bill, such as the cost of printing the member's speech in the Congressional Record. In addition, The House Chief Bill Clerk estimates the administrative cost to process and track identical House bills to be about \$500,000 annually. The estimated total annual cost of identical bills may exceed \$678,000.

In its original form, House Resolution 42 provided for a maximum of 10 members to jointly sponsor a resolution or bill. It was later agreed that 25 members seemed to be a reasonable limit to begin with and that perhaps the limit could be increased to 50 or 100 members in a few months.

The only objection raised during the House Resolution 42 discussion concerned increasing the number of joint sponsors to more than a majority of the House membership. Some members felt, if this were permitted, it could, in effect, become a precast vote. One congressman noted that the Senate--which allows the full membership to sponsor a bill--apparently had had no problems with senate members' changing their minds on support of a bill.

CONCLUSION

More than 8 years have passed since House Resolution 42 was approved. Undoubtedly House Resolution 42 has reduced the number of identical bills introduced and thereby has saved thousands of dollars.

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✓ However, the limit of 25 joint sponsors still makes identical bills necessary when the number of members desiring to jointly sponsor a bill exceeds that limit. By adopting the Senate's practice of permitting the full membership to jointly sponsor a bill, the House could realize considerable additional savings. (S) 1

RECOMMENDATION TO THE CHAIRMAN

We recommend that the Committee on Rules House of Representatives, adopt a resolution to allow the full membership of the House to jointly sponsor House bills.

Sincerely yours,

James R. Abbe

Comptroller General
of the United States

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